

February 17, 2022

My name is Metaxia (Mia) Samsel and I am from Guilford, CT. I am testifying on the Governor's proposed budget H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023 that unfortunately does not include critical funding for our safety net providers and their employees.

After decades of underfunding, Connecticut's direct support providers are in crisis mode because the effects of the pandemic have impacted their ability to attract and retain direct care workers and other employees. This staff is critically important to the safety and well-being of many of Connecticut's residents with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), including my own family.

My profoundly autistic son is currently placed out of state and is unable to return due to lack of staffing at the agencies. Qualified staff are leaving for better wages elsewhere. This situation has reached a critical point and changes must be made to protect those who do not have a voice by providing agencies the resources to provide competitive wages for direct support staff and funding for safety measures.

Without your help, our state's community service delivery system will continue to shrink and our loved ones will bear the brunt of this loss. We are already experiencing the worst staffing crisis that service providers have ever seen, which has resulted in an inability to resume programs paused during COVID and caused a rebound effect for family caregivers who are unable to return to work and contribute to Connecticut's economy.

Now more than ever, we need to ensure that critically necessary funding of \$150 million is included in this year's budget for the state's non-profit providers who care for our loved ones on a daily basis. We urge your support and ask that you add this funding to the budget before this committee.